



October 24, 2006

Chairman Kevin Martin
Commissioners Michael Copps
Adelstein
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Commissioner Jonathan
Commissioner Robert

Re: WC Docket No. 06-74, Support for AT&T BellSouth Merger

Dear FCC Chairman and Commissioners:

On behalf of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council (SBE Council), I write today to urge you to approve the pending merger of AT&T-BellSouth currently before the Commission. Without a doubt, this merger delivers a company that combines the innovation and successful track records of two entities that have helped the small business and entrepreneurial sector thrive for years with the technological access necessary to compete in today's global economy.

As you may know, the SBE Council is an organization that works with governing authorities both in Washington, D.C. and throughout the country to enact policies that seek to enhance the environment for business start-up and growth. Through advocacy, research and education, SBE Council members and staff convey the importance of small business to innovation, job creation, economic opportunity, and the U.S. economy. We communicate and take action on proposed initiatives that impact the productive activity of entrepreneurs. Pursuant to this mission, we strongly urge you to move forward with the pending merger.

A key ingredient to economic success and being able to compete in today's market requires access to technology, particularly high speed access. AT&T and BellSouth respectively are exemplary in this regard, and recent conditions offered by AT&T/BellSouth in this area would positively impact entrepreneurs.

First, the newly merged entity has pledged to provide DSL service for a low rate of \$10 per month, as well as offering free DSL upgrades to those customers with dial-up service. While these conditions only apply to residential living units, home-based businesses will greatly benefit from such a pledge. Such firms account for 53 percent of all small businesses, and they contribute significantly to the health, vitality and innovative capacity of the U.S. economy. Also, the spread of high speed access and service allows for additional telecommuting opportunities for today's workforce. The demand for workplace flexibility continues to grow, and tools that enable business leaders to meet these demands while operating efficiently is a critical advantage that provides benefits for employees and their families, businesses and our economy. The widespread availability and affordability of high speed access and service allows businesses to continually innovate, manage, and build upon their successes, 24/7.

Finally, AT&T/BellSouth has promised to devote at least 30% of all new broadband deployment to lower-income and rural areas, the very places that are currently underserved. Small businesses that reside in these areas need access just as much as their counterparts in big cities. Indeed, the power of technology can be an accelerator of economic growth and opportunity in these areas with broadband deployment being a key driver for entrepreneurial activity. The SBE Council applauds these companies for stepping forward for these underserved communities, and the small businesses that will benefit from their promise of broadband deployment.

We thank you for your consideration today, and for the reasons noted above, we urge your swift consideration and approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Kerrigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Kerrigan" clearly distinguishable.

Karen Kerrigan
President & CEO

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